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SUBJECT: IRAQ/AFGHANISTAN/MISSILE DEFENSE: USD/P EDELMAN,
A/S BOUCHER, AND D/NSA O'SULLIVAN BRIEF ALLIED PERMREPS

Classified By: Ambassador Victoria Nuland, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher, and Deputy National Security Advisor Meghan O'Sullivan briefed Allied PermReps on the latest U.S. thinking on Iraq, Afghanistan, and missile defense in a coffee session at USNATO on March 12. On Iraq, they elaborated for Allies that the surge of U.S. forces into Baghdad was the essential enabling element of a political, economic, and diplomatic strategy designed to help the Iraqi government make the tough choices needed to chart a forward course. On Afghanistan, they outlined U.S. assistance and priorities, and U.S. engagement with Pakistan. USD/P Edelman reminded Allies that U.S. missile defense plans for Europe were to counter the Iranian threat, and that the U.S. will continue the established pattern of consultation on cooperation with Russia and offers by Allies. Questions focused on handling Pakistan, missile defense, and U.S. contacts with Iran. END SUMMARY.

Iraq

¶2. (C) USD/P Edelman made clear that the surge of U.S. forces into Baghdad is not intended to resolve the situation militarily. Rather, military operations are intended to create the political space for the Iraqi government to take the necessary steps to solve problems and chart an Iraqi way ahead. Though the strategy was only a few weeks old, he cautioned, a decrease in sectarian killings in Baghdad, the reopening of markets, and other indicators provide grounds for cautious optimism. He noted, however, that spectacular VBIED attacks would continue and drew attention to the recent spate of terror attacks on Shiite pilgrims.

¶3. (C) Deputy National Security Advisor O'Sullivan reinforced USD/P Edelman's remarks and outlined the main tenets of the new Iraq strategy. She stressed that Iraq was

in the early stages of the new plan and we are only in a position to note the inputs to the strategy, not evaluate the outcome. She noted that the Iraqi surge battalions had arrived in Baghdad. Both she and USD/P Edelman pointed to the positive anticipated effects from Parliament's expected passage of a hydrocarbons law, which will ensure that Iraq's oil resources are a national patrimony, not to be used to benefit any one segment of the population over another. On the economic and political fronts, O'Sullivan outlined the plan to increase numbers of USG civilians embedded with military units outside of the Green Zone doing on-the-scene economic development work, and anticipated greater Sunni participation in upcoming provincial elections. She told PermReps that the March 10 Iraq neighbors conference was constructive, and in response to a question from Spain, stated that no official bilats had been held between the U.S. and Iran, but that delegates had spoken informally. USD/P Edelman underscored the need to keep strong international pressure on Iran to live up to its non-proliferation obligations.

Afghanistan

¶4. (C) USD/P Edelman said that he personally did not use the term "Taliban spring offensive," to characterize resurgent Taliban activity, because it lent an air of legitimacy to Taliban actions. Noting that the Taliban had adjusted tactics following the successes of the international community in 2004-2005, he reminded PermReps of the U.S. commitment to a comprehensive approach, encompassing military operations, reconstruction, development, and civil society

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activity. He pushed back strongly against the conventional wisdom in Europe that the U.S. only focuses on military operations, noting that U.S. military counterinsurgency doctrine emphasized that 80% of an effort was political and economic.

¶5. (C) A/S Boucher outlined the comprehensive approach and noted U.S. priorities in training and equipping Afghan national security forces, building roads, constructing electricity infrastructure, reforming the justice sector, and fighting narcotics. The Administration had asked for \$11.8 billion from Congress for this, he said, and he sensed a supportive mood on the Hill. He told Ambassadors that the Afghan government was making much greater progress on poppy eradication this year as compared to last, and was on track to add six to eight more provinces to the "poppy free" list. Helmand remained a serious challenge, but a nearer-term goal was to declare northern, western, and central Afghanistan poppy-free. Turning to strategic communications, and effective cooperation between the Afghan government, ISAF, and nations, he highlighted the key role of the Afghans' new National Communications Coordination Center (NC3). The Dutch PermRep noted that the U.S. policy on Iraq sounded very much like the policy on Afghanistan -- a development he welcomed.

Pakistan

¶6. (S) A/S Boucher said that Secretary Rice would be traveling to Pakistan in the coming month or so. He pointed to U.S. economic support for Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in Pakistan's border region as a key part of our relationship. In response to comments by the UK, Canadian, and Romanian Ambassadors on how best to deal with President Musharraf, A/S Boucher said that the Pakistanis want recognition of their accomplishments in the war on terrorism, and the difficulties they face. We are frank and clear in our bilateral discussions with them, he assured, but we talk as partners in a common cause. He stated that Pakistan is looking to build a relationship with NATO, and urged a visit

to Islamabad by SYG de Hoop Scheffer. USD/P Edelman reminded Allies that the region comprising the Pakistani-Afghan border had never been under the control of any government or authority; President Musharraf needed help from partners to realize his commitments in the war on terrorism there. He counseled Allies to push the Pakistani government privately to do more, without further complicating Musharraf's challenging domestic political situation.

Missile Defense

¶7. (C) In response to a question from the Czech ambassador, USD/P Edelman told Allies we continue to talk with the Czech Republic, Poland, Denmark, and the UK on our European missile defense plans. He reiterated the goal was to stay ahead of the Iranian missile threat, and that we continue to offer possibilities for cooperation to the Russians. He pointed to the upcoming Reinforced NAC on April 19 with LTG Obering as an opportunity for further consultation, and while noting that missile defense under a NATO rubric would certainly need NAC approval, hoped that movement at NATO could occur in parallel with U.S. initiatives.

¶8. (U) The delegation has cleared this cable.
NULAND